

go and find them, for it was then after supper. He went out, and in passing through the shed smelled a strong smell of peppermint, and turning to find where it came from, spied the boys quite near him, crouching behind some barrels.

Without saying anything to them he went in and asked his wife if she had a large baking-pan.

"How large?" she asked.

"Large enough for baking two Gingerbread Boys," he answered.

"How large are your Gingerbread Boys?"

"I'll show you," he said, and went out, and soon

came back leading the small cousins. "Here are my Gingerbread Boys!" said he. "They are rather soft. They will need a hot oven."

"Peppermint Boys, I should think!" cried his wife, sniffing; and by this time everybody in the room was sniffing, and laughing, and asking questions. The small cousins drew from their breast pockets the upper parts of the peppermint vials, with the corks still in them.

While they ate their supper they told their story; but Robbie's mother would not let them lean against her table-cloth.

## FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS; AND HOW THEY GREW.

BY MARGARET SIDNEY.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### EDUCATION AHEAD.

**A**FTER that they couldn't thank Jasper enough! They tried to, lovingly, and an elaborate letter of thanks, headed by Mrs. Pepper, was drawn up and sent with a box of the results of Polly's diligent study of Jasper's book. Polly stripped off recklessly her choicest buds and blossoms from the gay little stand of flowers in the corner, that had already begun to blossom, and tucked them into every little nook in the box that could possibly hold a posy. But as for thanking him enough!

"We can't do it, mammy," said Polly, looking around on all the happy faces, and then up at Cherry, who was singing in the window, and who immediately swelled up his little throat and poured out such a merry burst of song that she had to wait for him to finish. "No, not if we tried a thousand years!"

"I'm a-goin'," said Joel, who was busy as a bee with his new tools that the tree had shaken down for him, "to make Jappy the splendorous box *you* ever see, Polly! I guess that'll thank him!"

"Do," cried Polly; "he'd be so pleased, Joey."

"And I," said Phronsie, over in the corner with her children, "I'm goin' to see my poor sick man sometime, Polly, I *am*!"

"Oh, mercy!" cried Polly, whirling around, and looking at her mother in dismay. "She'll be goin' tomorrow! Oh, no, Phronsie, you can't; he lives miles and miles away — oh, ever so far!"

"Does he live as far as the moon?" asked little Phronsie, carefully laying Seraphina down, and looking up at Polly, anxiously.

"Oh, I don't know," said Polly, giving Cherry a piece of bread, and laughing to see how cunning he looked. "Oh, no, of course not, but it's an *awful* long ways, Phronsie."

"I don't care," said Phronsie, determinedly, giving the new doll a loving little pat, "I'm goin' sometime, Polly, to thank my poor sick man, yes, I *am*!"

"You'll see him next summer, Phronsie," sang Polly skipping around the kitchen, "and Jappy's sister Marian, the lovely lady, and all the boys. Won't that be nice?" and Polly stopped to pat the yellow head bending in motherly attentions over her array of dolls.

"Ye-es," said Phronsie, slowly; "the whole of 'em, Polly?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Polly, gaily; "the whole of 'em, Phronsie!"

"Hooray!" shouted the two boys, while Phronsie only gave a long sigh, and clasped her hands.

"Better not be lookin' for summer," said Mrs. Pepper, "until you do your duty by the winter; *then* you



can enjoy it," and she took a fresh needlefull of thread.

"Mamsie's right," said Ben, smiling over at her. And he threw down his book and jumped for his cap. "Now for a good chop!" he cried, and snatching a kiss from Phronsie, he rushed out of the door to his work, whistling as he went.

"Warn't Mr. Henderson good, ma," asked Polly, watching his retreating figure, "to give Ben learnin'?"

"Yes, he was," replied Mrs. Pepper, enthusiastically. "*We've* got a parson, if anybody has in *this* world!"

"And Ben's a-learnin'," said Polly, swelling with pride, as she sat down by her mother, and began to sew rapidly, "so that he'll be a big man right off! Oh, dear," as a thought made her needle pause a minute in its quick flying in and out.

"What is it, Polly?" Mrs. Pepper looked keenly at the troubled face and downcast eyes.

"Why—" began Polly, and then she finished very slowly, "I shan't know nothin', and Ben'll be ashamed of me."

"Yes, you will!" cried Mrs. Pepper, energetically, "you keep on a-tryin', and the Lord'll send some way; don't you go to botherin' your head about it now, Polly—it'll come when it's time."

"Will it?" asked Polly, doubtfully, taking up her needle again.

"Yes, indeed!" cried Mrs. Pepper, briskly; "come fly at your sewin'; that's *your* learnin' now."

"So 'tis," said Polly, with a little laugh. "Now let's see which'll get their seam done first, mamsie!"

And now letters flew thick and fast from the city to the little brown house, and back again, warming Jasper's heart, and filling the tedious months of that winter with more of jollity and fun than the lad ever enjoyed before; and never was fun and jolity more needed than now; for Mr. King, having nothing to do, and each year finding himself less inclined to exercise and thoughtful energy for others, began to look at life something in the light of a serious bore, and accordingly made it decidedly disagreeable for all around him, and particularly for Jasper who was his constant companion. But the boy was looking forward to summer, and so held on bravely.

"I do verily believe, Polly," he wrote, "that Badgertown'll see the gayest times it ever knew! Sister Marian wants to go, so *that's* all right. Now,

hurrah for a good time—it's surely coming!"

But alas! for Jasper! as spring advanced, his father took a decided aversion to Hingham, Badgertown, and all other places that *could* be mentioned in that vicinity.

"It's a wretched climate," he asserted, over and over; "and the foundation of all my ill feelings this winter was laid, I'm convinced, in Hingham last summer."

No use to urge the contrary; and all Jasper's pleadings were equally vain. At last, sister Marian, who was kind-hearted to a fault, sorry to see her brother's dismay and disappointment said, one day, "Why not have one of the children come here? I should like it very much—do invite Ben."

"I don't want Ben," said Jasper gloomily, "I want Polly." He added this in much the same tone as Phronsie's when she had rushed up to him the day she was lost, declaring, "I want Polly!"

"Very well, then," said sister Marian, laughing, "I'm sure I didn't mean to dictate which one; let it *be* Polly then; yes, I should prefer Polly myself, I think, as we've enough boys now," smiling to think of her own brood of wide awake youngsters.

"If you only will, father, I'll try to be *ever* so good!" said Jasper, turning suddenly to his father.

"Jasper needs some change," said sister Marian kindly, "he really has grown very pale and thin."

"*Hey!*" said Mr. King, sharply, looking at him over his eye-glasses. "The boy's well enough; well enough!" But he twisted uneasily in his chair, all the same. At last he flung down his paper, twitched his fingers through his hair two or three times, and then burst out—

"Well, why don't you send for her? I'm sure I don't care—I'll write myself, and I had better do it now. Tell Thomas to be ready to take it right down; it must get into this mail."

When Mr. King had made up his mind to do anything, everybody else must immediately give up *their* individual plans, and stand out of the way for him to execute his at just that particular moment! Accordingly Thomas was dragged from his work to post the letter, while the old gentleman occupied the time in pulling out his watch every third second until the slightly-out-of-breath Thomas reported on his return that the letter did get in. Then Mr. King settled down satisfied, and everything went on smoothly as before.

But Polly didn't come! A grateful, appreciative



letter, expressed in Mrs. Pepper's own stiff way, plainly showed the determination of that good woman not to accept what was such a favor to her child.

In vain Mr. King stormed, and fretted, and begged, offering every advantage possible — Polly should have the best foundation for a musical education that the city could afford; also lessons in the schoolroom under the boys' private tutor — it was all of no avail. In vain sister Marian sent a gentle appeal, fully showing her heart was in it; nothing broke down Mrs. Pepper's resolve, until, at last, the old gentleman wrote one day that Jasper, being in such failing health, really depended on Polly to cheer him up. *That* removed the last straw that made it "putting one's self under an obligation," which to Mrs. Pepper's independent soul, had seemed insurmountable.

And now, it was decided that Polly was *really* to go! and pretty soon all Badgertown knew that Polly Pepper was going to the big city. And there wasn't a man, woman, or child but what greatly rejoiced that a sunny time was coming to one of the chicks in the little brown house. With many warm words, and some substantial gifts, kind friends helped forward the "outing." Only one person doubted that this delightful chance should be grasped at once — and that one was Polly herself!

"I *can't*," she said, and stood quite pale and still, when the Hendersons advised her mother's approval, and even Grandma Bascom said, "Go." "I can't go and leave mammy to do all the work."

"But don't you see, Polly," said Mrs. Henderson, drawing her to her side, "that you will help your mother twice as much as you possibly could here, by getting a good education? Think what your music will be; only think, Polly!"

Polly drew a long breath at this and turned away.

"Oh, Polly!" cried Ben, though his voice choked, "if you give this up, there never'll be another chance," and the boy put his arm around her, and whispered something in her ear.

"I know," said Polly quietly — and then she burst out, "oh, but I can't! 'taint right."

"Polly," said Mrs. Pepper — and never in all their lives had the children seen such a look in mamsie's eyes as met them then; "it does seem as if my heart would be broke if you didn't go!" And then she burst out crying, right before them all!

"Oh mammy," cried Polly, breaking away from everybody, and flinging herself into her arms. "I'll go — if you think I ought to. But it's too good!

don't cry — *don't*, mammy dear," and Polly stroked the careworn face lovingly, and patted the smooth hair that was still so black.

"And, Polly," said Mrs. Pepper, smiling through her tears, "just think what a comfort you'll be to me, and us all," she added, taking in the children who were crowding around Polly as the center of attraction. "Why, you'll be the making of us," she added hopefully.

"I'll do *something*," said Polly, her brown eyes kindling, "or I shan't be worthy of you, mammy."

"O, you'll do it," said Mrs. Pepper, confidently, "now that you're a-goin'."

But when Polly stepped into the stage, with her little hair trunk strapped on behind, containing her one brown merino that Mrs. Henderson had made over for her out of one of her own, and her two new gingham, her courage failed again, and she astonished everybody, and nearly upset a mild-faced old lady who was in the corner placidly eating doughnuts, by springing out and rushing up through the little brown gate, past all the family, drawn up to see her off. She flew over the old flat door-stone, and into the bed-room, where she flung herself down between the old bed and Phronsie's crib, in a perfect torrent of tears. "I *can't* go!" she sobbed — "oh I *can't*!"

"Why, Polly!" cried Mrs. Pepper, hurrying in, followed by Joel and the rest of the troops at his heels. "What are you thinking of!"

"Think of by-and-by, Polly," put in Ben, patting her on the back with an unsteady hand, while Joel varied the proceedings by running back and forth, screaming at the top of his lungs, "The stage's a-goin'! your trunk'll be took!"

"Mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Pepper, "do stop it somebody! there, Polly, come now! what'll everybody think!"

"I'll try again," said poor Polly, choking back her sobs, and getting on her feet.

Then Polly's tears were wiped away, her hat straightened, after which she was kissed all round again by the whole family, Phronsie waiting for the last two, and then was helped again into the stage, the bags and parcels, and a box for Jappy, which, as it wouldn't go into the trunk, Joel had insisted Polly should carry in her hand, were again piled around her, and Mr. Tisbett mounted to his seat, and with a crack of the whip, bore her safely off this time.

The doughnut lady, viewing poor Polly with ex-



treme sympathy, immediately forced upon her acceptance three of the largest and sugariest.

"'Twill do you good," she said, falling to herself, on another with good zeal. "I always eat 'em, and then there aint no room for homesickness!"

And away, and away, and away they rumbled and jumbled to the cars.

Here Mr. Tisbett put Polly and her numerous bundles under the care of the conductor, with manifold charges and explicit directions, to see her safely into Mr. King's own hands. He left her sitting straight up among her parcels, her sturdy little figure drawn up to its full height, and the clear brown eyes regaining a little of their dancing light; for although an *awful* feeling tugged at her heart, as she thought of the little brown house she was fast flying away from, still our Polly had so soon began to get over her homesickness.

And now they neared the big city, and everybody began to bustle around, and get ready to jump out, and the minute the train stopped, the crowd poured out from the cars, making way for the crowd pouring in, for this was a through train.

"All *aboard!*" sang the conductor. "Oh *gracious!*" springing to Polly; "I forgot you — *here!*"

But as quick as a flash he was pushed aside, and a bright, boyish figure dashed up.

"Oh, Polly!" he said in such a ringing voice! and in another second, Polly and her bag, and the bundle of cakes and apples that Grandma Bascom had put up for her, and Joel's box, were one and all bundled out upon the platform, and the train whizzed on, and there Mr. King was fuming up and down, berating the departing conductor, and speaking his mind in regard to all the railroad officials he could think of. He pulled himself up long enough to give Polly a hearty welcome; and then away again he flew in righteous indignation, while Jasper rushed off into the baggage room with Polly's check.

However, every now and then, turning to look down into the little rosy face beside him, the old gentleman would burst forth, "Bless me, child! I'm glad you're here, Polly! — how could the fellow forget when" —

"Oh well, you know," said Polly, with a happy little wriggle under her brown coat, "I'm here now."

"So you are! so you are!" laughed the old gentleman suddenly; "where can Jasper be so long."

"They're all in the carriage," answered the boy, skipping back. "Now, father! now Polly!"

He was fairly bubbling over with joy and Mr. King forgot his dudgeon and joined in the general glee, which soon became so great that travellers gave many a glance at the merry trio who bundled away to Thomas and the waiting greys.

"You're sure you've got the right check?" asked Mr. King, nervously, getting into a handsome coach lined with dark green satin, and settling down among its ample cushions with a sigh of relief,

"Oh yes," laughed Jasper; "Polly didn't have any one else's check, I guess!"

Over through the heart of the city, down narrow,



POLLY IS REALLY ON THE WAY.

noisy business streets, out into wide avenues, with handsome stately mansions on either side — they flew along.

"Oh" said Polly; and then she stopped, and blushed very hard.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Mr. King, kindly.

Polly couldn't speak at first, but when Jasper stopped his merry chat and begged to know what it was, she turned on him, and burst out, "You *live* here?"

"Why, yes," laughed the boy; "why not?"

"*Oh!*" said Polly again, her cheeks as red as two roses, "it's *so lovely!*"

And then the carriage turned in at a brown stone gateway, and winding up among some fine old trees, stopped before a large, stately residence that in Polly's eyes seemed like one of the castles of Ben's famous stories. And then Mr. King got out, and gallantly escorted Polly out, and up the steps, while Jasper fol-



lowed with Polly's bag which he couldn't be persuaded to resign to Thomas. A stiff waiter held the door open — and then, the rest was only a pleasant, confused jumble of kind welcoming words, smiling faces, with a background of high spacious walls, bright pictures, and soft elegant hangings, everything and all inextricably mixed — till Polly herself seemed floating — away — away, fast to the Fairyland of her dreams; now, Mr. King was handing her around, like a precious parcel, from one to the other — now Jasper was bobbing in and out everywhere, introducing her on all sides, and then Prince was jumping up and trying to lick her face every minute — but best of all was it when a lovely face looked down into hers and Jasper's sister bent to kiss her.

"I am *very* glad to have you here, little Polly." The words were simple, but Polly, lifting up her clear brown eyes, looked straight into the heart of the speaker, and from that moment never ceased to love her.

"It was a good inspiration," thought Mrs. Whitney to herself; "this little girl is going to be a comfort, I know." And then she set herself to conduct successfully her three boys into friendliness and good fellowship with Polly, for each of them was following his own sweet will in the capacity of host, and besides staring at her with all his might, was determined to do the whole of the entertaining, a state of things which might become unpleasant. However, Polly stood it like a veteran.

"This little girl must be very tired," said Mrs. Whitney, at last with a bright smile. "Besides I am going to have her to myself now."

"Oh, no, no," cried little Dick in alarm; "why, she's just come; we want to see her."

"For shame, Dick!" said Percy, the eldest, a boy of ten years, who took every opportunity to reprove Dick in public; "she's come a great ways, so she ought to rest, you know."

"You wanted her to come out to the greenhouse yourself, you know you did," put in Van, the next to Percy, who never *would* be reprov'd or patronized, "only she wouldn't go."

"You'll come down to dinner," said Percy, politely, ignoring Van. "Then you won't be tired, perhaps."

"Oh, I'm not very tired now," said Polly, brightly, with a merry little laugh, "only I've never been in the cars before, and" —

"*Never been in the cars before!*" exclaimed Van, crowding up, while Percy made a big round O with

his mouth, and little Dick's eyes stretched to their widest extent.

"No," said Polly simply, "never in all my life."

"Come, dear," said sister Marian, rising quickly, and taking Polly's hand; while Jasper, showing unmistakable symptoms of pitching into all the three boys, followed with the bag.

Up the broad oak staircase they went, Polly holding by Mrs. Whitney's soft hand, as if for dear life, and Jasper tripping up two steps at a time, in front of them. They turned after reaching the top, down a hall soft to the foot and brightly lighted.

"Now, Polly," said sister Marian, "I'm going to have you here, right next to my dressing room; this is your nest, little bird, and I hope you'll be very happy in it."

And here Mrs. Whitney turned up the gas, and then, just because she couldn't help it, gathered Polly up in her arms without another word. Jasper set down the bag on a chair, and came and stood by his sister's side, looking down at her as she stroked the brown wavy hair on her bosom.

"It's *so* nice to have Polly here, sister," he said, and he put his hand on Mrs. Whitney's neck; and then with the other hand took hold of both of Polly's chubby ones, who looked up and smiled; and in that smile the little brown house seemed to hop right out, and bring back in a flash all the nice times those eight happy weeks had brought him.

"Oh, 'twas so perfectly splendid, sister Marian," he cried, flinging himself down on the floor by her chair. "You don't know *what* good times we had — does she, Polly?" and then he launched out into a perfect shower of "Don't you remember this?" or "Oh, Polly! you surely haven't forgotten that!" Mrs. Whitney good naturedly entering into it and enjoying it all with them, until, warned by the lateness of the hour, she laughingly reminded Jasper of dinner, and dismissed him to prepare for it.

When the three boys saw Polly coming in again, they welcomed her with a cordial shout, for one and all, after careful measurement of her, had succumbed entirely to Polly; and each was unwilling that the others should get ahead of him in her regard.

"This is your seat, Polly," said sister Marian, touching the chair next to her own.

Thereupon a small fight ensued between the little Whitneys, while Jasper looked decidedly discomfited.

"Let Polly sit next to me," said Van, as if a seat



next to him was of all things most to be desired.

"Oh, no, I want her," said little Dick.

"Pshaw, Dick! you're too young," put in Percy.  
"You'd spill the bread and butter all over her."

"I wouldn't either," said little Dick, indignantly, and beginning to crawl into his seat; "I don't spill bread and butter, now Percy, you know."

"See here," said Jasper, decidedly, "she's coming up here by father and me; that is, sister Marian," he finished more politely, "if you're willing."

All this while Polly had stood quietly watching the group, the big, handsome table, the bright lights, and the well-trained servants with a curious feeling at her heart — what were the little-brown-house-people doing?



POLLY'S ARRIVAL.

"Polly shall decide it," said sister Marian, laughing. "Now, where will you sit, dear?" she added, looking down on the little quiet figure beside her.

"Oh, by Jappy, please," said Polly, quickly, as if there *could* be no doubt; "and kind Mr. King," she added, smiling at him.

"That's right; that's right, my dear," cried the old gentleman, pleased beyond measure at her honest

choice. And he pulled out her chair, and waited upon her into it so handsomely that Polly was happy at once; while Jasper, with a proud fling to his dark, wavy hair, marched up delightedly, and took the chair on her other side.

And now, in two or three minutes it seemed as if Polly had always been there; it was the most natural thing in the world that sister Marian should smile



down the table at the bright-faced narrator, who answered all their numerous questions, and entertained them all with accounts of Ben's skill, of Phronsie's cunning ways, of the boys who made fun for all, and above everything else of the dear mother whom they all longed to help, and of all the sayings and doings in the little brown house. No wonder that the little boys forgot to eat; and for once never thought of the attractions of the table. And when, as they left the table at last, little Dick rushed impulsively up to Polly, and flinging himself into her arms, declared—

"I love you!—and you're my sister!" Nothing more was needed to make Polly feel at home.

"Yes," said Mrs. Whitney, and nodded to herself in the saying, "it *was* a good thing; and a comfort, I believe, has come to this house this day!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### BRAVE WORK, AND THE REWARD.

And on the very first morrow came Polly's music teacher!

The big drawing-room, with its shaded light and draped furniture, with its thick soft carpet, on which no foot-fall could be heard, with all its beauty and loveliness on every side was nothing to Polly's eyes, only the room that contained the piano!

That was all she saw! And when the teacher came he was simply the Fairy (an ugly little one, it is true, but still a most powerful being) who was to unlock its mysteries, and conduct her into Fairyland itself. He was a homely little Frenchman, with a long, curved nose, and an enormous black moustache, magnificently waxed, who bowed elaborately, and called her "Mademoiselle Pep-paire;" but he had music in his soul, and Polly couldn't reverence him too much.

And now the big piano gave out new sounds; sounds that told of a strong purpose and strong patience. Every note was struck for mother and the home brood. Monsieur Tourtelotte, after watching her keenly out of his little black eyes, would nod to himself like a mandarin, and the nod would be followed by showers of extra politeness, as his appreciation of her patient energy and attention.

Every chance she could get, Polly would steal away into the drawing-room from Jappy and the three boys and all the attractions they could offer, and laboriously work away over and over at the tedious scales

and exercises that were to be stepping-stones to so much that was glorious beyond. Never had she sat still for so long a time in her active little life; and now, with her arms at just such an angle, with the stiff, chubby fingers kept under training and restraint—well, Polly realized, years after, that only her love of the little brown house could *ever* have kept her from flying up and spinning around in perfect despair.

"She likes it!" said Percy, in absolute astonishment, one day, when Polly had refused to go out driving with all the other children in the park, and had gone resolutely, instead, into the drawing-room and



THE INDEFATIGABLE POLLY.

shut the door. "She likes those hateful old exercises and she don't like anything else."

"Much you know about it," said Jappy; "she's perfectly aching to go, now Percy Whitney!"

"Well, why don't she then?" said Percy, opening his eyes to their widest extent.

"'Cause," said Jasper, stopping on his way to the door to look him full in the face, "she's commenced to learn to play, and there won't *anything* stop her."

"I'm going to try," said Percy, gleefully. "I know lots of ways I can do to try, anyway."

"See here, now," said Jasper, turning back, "you let her alone! Do you hear?" he added, and there must have been something in his eye to command attention, for Percy instantly signified his intention not



to tease this young music student in the least.

"Come on then, old fellow," and Jasper swung his cap on his head, "Thomas will be like forty bears if we keep him waiting much longer."

And Polly kept at it steadily day after day ; getting through with the lessons in the school room as quickly as possible to rush to her music, until presently the little Frenchman waxed enthusiastic to that degree that, as day after day progressed and swelled into weeks, and each lesson came to an end, he would skip away on the tips of his toes, his nose in the air, and the waxed ends of his moustache, fairly trembling with delight—

"Ah, such patience as Mademoiselle Pep-paire has ! I know no other such little Americane !"

"I think," said Jasper one evening after dinner, when all the children were assembled as usual in their favorite place on the big rug in front of the fire in the library, Prince in the middle of the group, his head on his paws, watching everything in infinite satisfaction, "that Polly's getting on in music as I never saw anyone do ; and that's a fact !"

"I mean to begin," said Van, ambitiously, sitting up straight and staring at the glowing coals. "I guess I will to-morrow," which announcement was received with a perfect shout—Van's taste being anything rather than of a musical nature.

"If you do," said Jappy, when the merriment had a little subsided, "I shall go out of the house at every lesson ; there won't anyone stay in it, Van."

"I can bang all I want to, then," said Van, noways disturbed by the reflection, and pulling one of Prince's long ears, "you think you're so big, Jappy, just because you're thirteen."

"He's only three ahead of me, Van," bristled Percy, who never could forgive Jappy for being his uncle, much less the still greater sin of having been born three years earlier than himself.

"Three's just as bad as four," said Van.

"Let's tell stories," began Polly, who never could remember such goings on in the little brown house ; "we must each tell one," she added with the greatest enthusiasm, "and see which will be the biggest and the best."

"Oh, no," said Van, who perfectly revelled in Polly's stories, and who now forgot his trials in the prospect of one, "you tell, Polly—you tell alone."

"Yes, do, Polly," said Jasper ; "we'd rather."

So Polly launched out into one of her gayest and finest ; and soon they were in such a peal of laughter, and had reached such heights of enjoyment, that Mr. King popped his head in at the door, and then came in, and took a seat in a big rocking-chair in the corner to hear the fun go on.

"Oh, dear," said Van, leaning back with a long sigh, and wiping his flushed face as Polly wound up with a triumphant flourish, "how ever do you think of such things, Polly Pepper ?"

"That isn't anything," said Jappy, bringing his handsome face out into the strong light ; "why, it's just nothing to what she has told time and again in the little brown house in Badgertown ;" and then he caught sight of Polly's face, which turned a little pale in the firelight as he spoke ; and the brown eyes had such a pathetic droop in them that it went to the boy's very heart.

Was Polly homesick ? and so soon !

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

---

## MRS. BEE EXPLAINS.

BY MARGARET EYTINGE.

---

S AID Mrs. Wasp to Mrs. Bee,  
 "Will you a favor do me ?  
 There's something I can't understand—  
 Please, ma'am, explain it to me :  
 Why do men build for *you* a house  
 And coax you to go in it,  
 While *me*—your cousin—they'll not let  
 Stay near them for a minute ?

I have a sting, I do confess,  
 And should not like to lose it,  
 But so have you, and when you're vexed  
 I'm very sure you use it !"  
 "Well," said the bee, "to you, no doubt,  
 It does seem rather funny ;  
 But people soon forget the stings  
 Of those who give them honey !"